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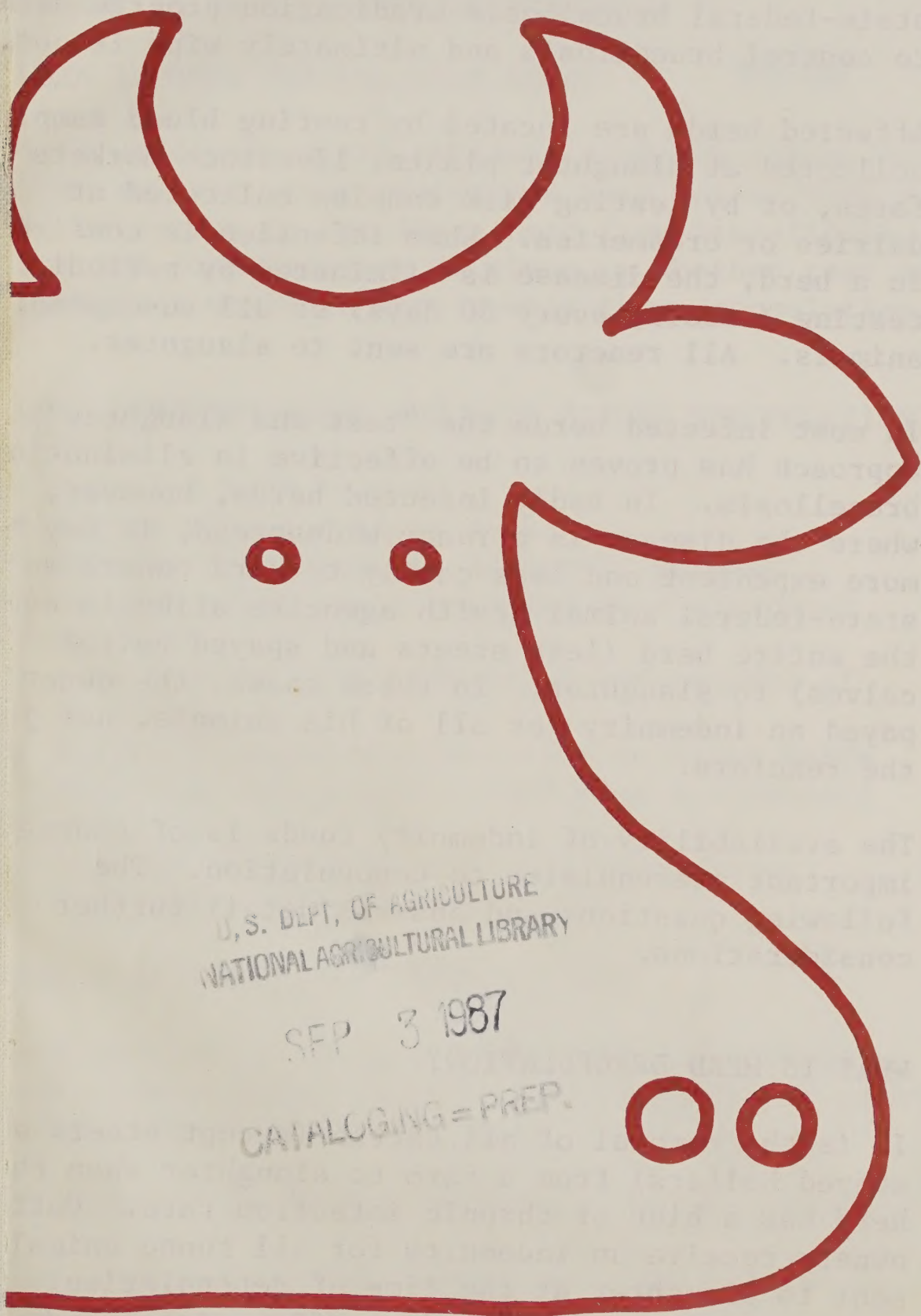
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Herd Depopulation: An Alternative



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Cooperative State-Federal
Rabies Eradication Program

Brucellosis, commonly called Bang's disease, is an infectious, reproductive disease that can be extremely costly to herd owners in terms of aborted calves and reduced milk yield. The cooperative state-federal brucellosis eradication program seeks to control brucellosis and ultimately wipe it out.

Affected herds are located by testing blood samples collected at slaughter plants, livestock markets or farms, or by testing milk samples collected at dairies or creameries. When infection is confirmed in a herd, the disease is eliminated by periodic testing (usually every 30 days) of all susceptible animals. All reactors are sent to slaughter.

In most infected herds the "test and slaughter" approach has proven to be effective in eliminating brucellosis. In badly infected herds, however, where the disease is already widespread, it may be more expedient and less costly to herd owners and state-federal animal health agencies alike to send the entire herd (less steers and spayed heifer calves) to slaughter. In these cases, the owner is paid an indemnity for all of his animals, not just the reactors.

The availability of indemnity funds is of course an important prerequisite to depopulation. The following questions and answers detail further considerations.

WHAT IS HERD DEPOPULATION?

It is the removal of all cattle (except steers and spayed heifers) from a farm to slaughter when the herd has a high or chronic infection rate. Cattle owners receive an indemnity for all those animals sent to slaughter at the time of depopulation. Non-bred heifers may be spayed at USDA expense and retained for further feeding (without indemnity)

if the owner so desires. The farm must remain vacated of all cattle (except steers and spayed heifers) for at least 30 days after depopulation to assure that infection will not be carried over to cattle used to rebuild the herd.

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WHEN IS HERD DEPOPULATION USED?

It's used only where definite evidence exists that test and slaughter procedures have not or will not be effective in freeing a herd from brucellosis. Special consideration is given to whether test and slaughter would be more costly than depopulation.

WHAT CONSIDERATIONS ARE MADE BEFORE DEPOPULATION?

- detailed herd history
- number of reactors in herd
- Strain 19 vaccination history: percent vaccinated in adult herd and in replacement heifers
- time between past herd tests and removal of reactors
- danger infected herd presents to other herds
- herd test results in neighboring and contact herds
- cost to owner if herd is not depopulated
- herd and area infection status

WHO AUTHORIZES HERD DEPOPULATION?

The approval of both the herd owner and state and federal animal health officials must be given before depopulation can occur.

INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT DEPOPULATION?

For more information call your state-federal veterinarian.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
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